

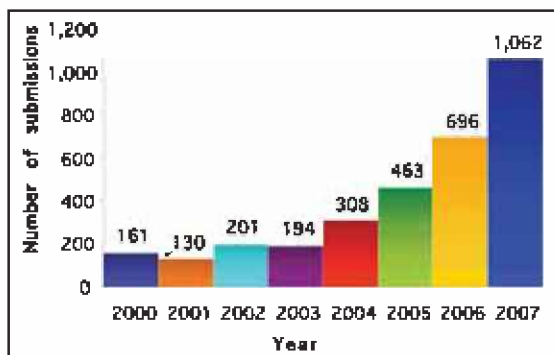
# The internationalisation of the Singapore Medical Journal

Peh W C G

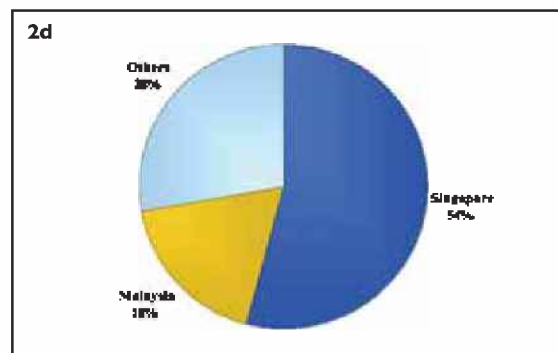
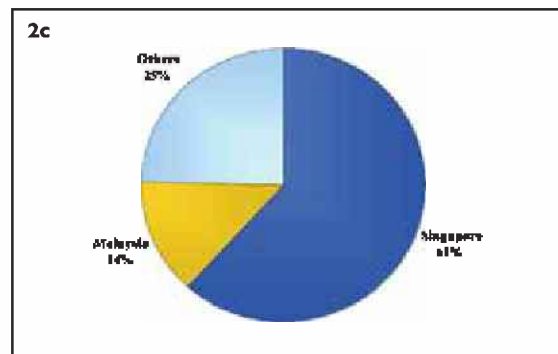
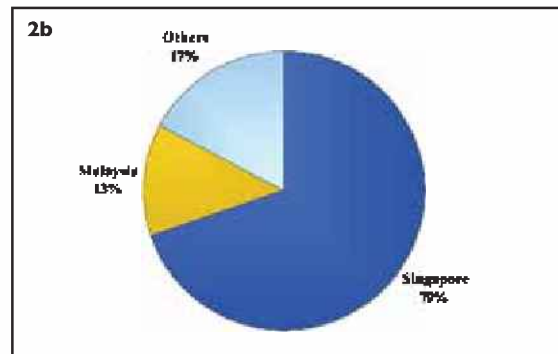
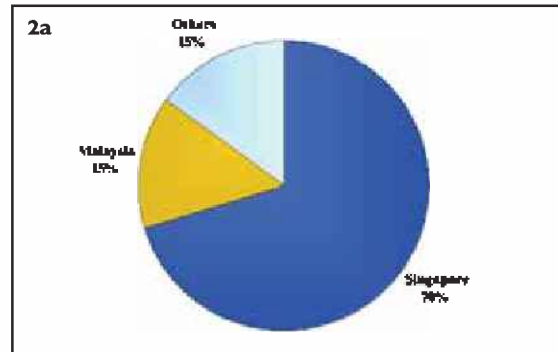
Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil and Brunei Darussalam. What do these countries have in common? If you had guessed that authors from these countries had submitted their manuscripts to the Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ) in 2007, then you are absolutely correct. They were part of the 1,062 manuscripts from 45 different countries that the SMJ received last year. The SMJ has been receiving an increasing number of manuscript submissions over the past eight years, rising from 161 in 2000 to 1,062 in 2007 (Fig. 1). Various measures have already been implemented by the SMJ in the recent two years in anticipation of and in response to this rising trend.<sup>(1-3)</sup>

Further analysis of these figures reveals some interesting information. Traditionally, the largest number of manuscripts has always been from authors based in Singapore, followed by Malaysian authors. This was true up to 2005. In 2006, India displaced Malaysia into third position; and in 2007, for the first time in SMJ history, India became the number one contributor of manuscripts (with 304) to the SMJ, pushing Singapore into second place (189), while Iran took third position (129), with Malaysia slipping to fourth (124), followed by Turkey (44), Pakistan (37), USA (23) and Nigeria (21) (Figs. 2a-h).

Has the number of submissions from Singapore declined? Not at all. In fact, the number of manuscripts received by Singapore authors have showed a steady rise, from 113 in 2000 to 189 in 2007 (Fig. 3). How about Malaysian submissions? These too have shown an impressive increase, rising from 24 in 2000 to 124 in 2007 (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 1** Bar chart shows the number of submissions to SMJ from 2000 to 2007.



**Fig. 2** Pie charts show the distribution of manuscripts (by country) submitted to SMJ in (a) 2000, (b) 2001, (c) 2002, and (d) 2003.

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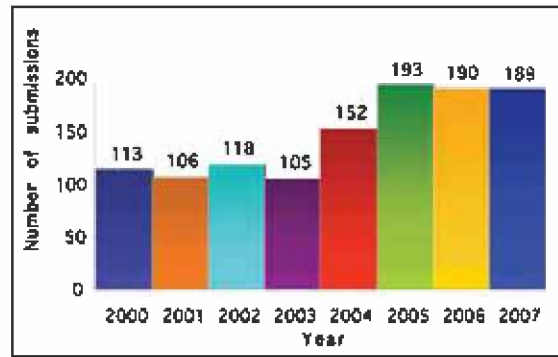
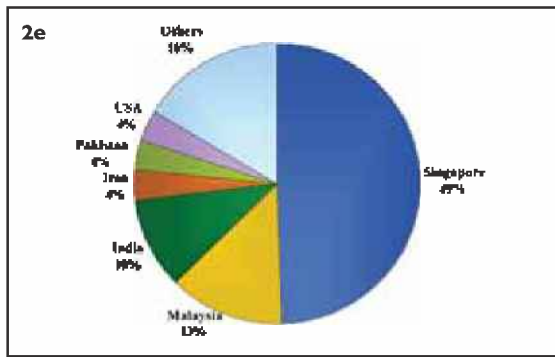


Fig. 3 Bar chart shows the number of submissions from Singapore authors to SMJ from 2000 to 2007.

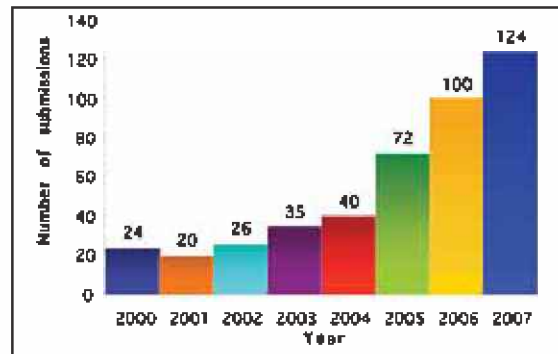
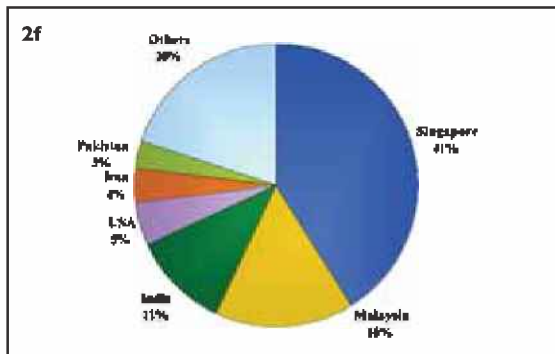


Fig. 4 Bar chart shows the number of submissions from Malaysian authors to SMJ from 2000 to 2007.

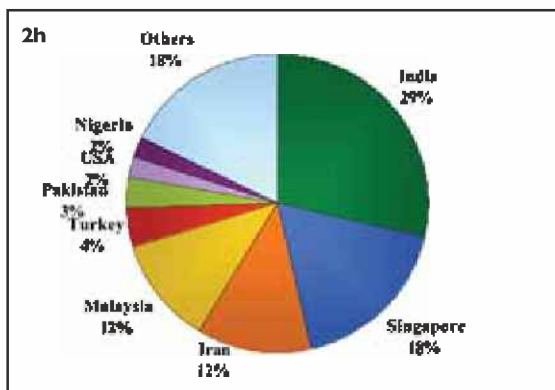
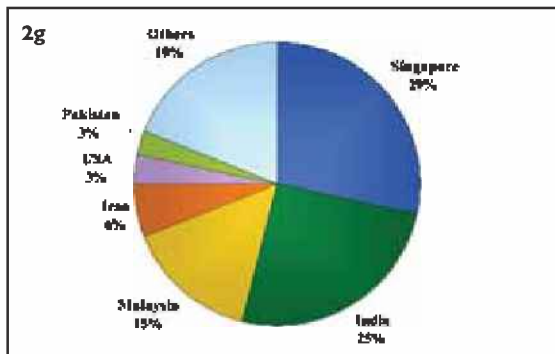
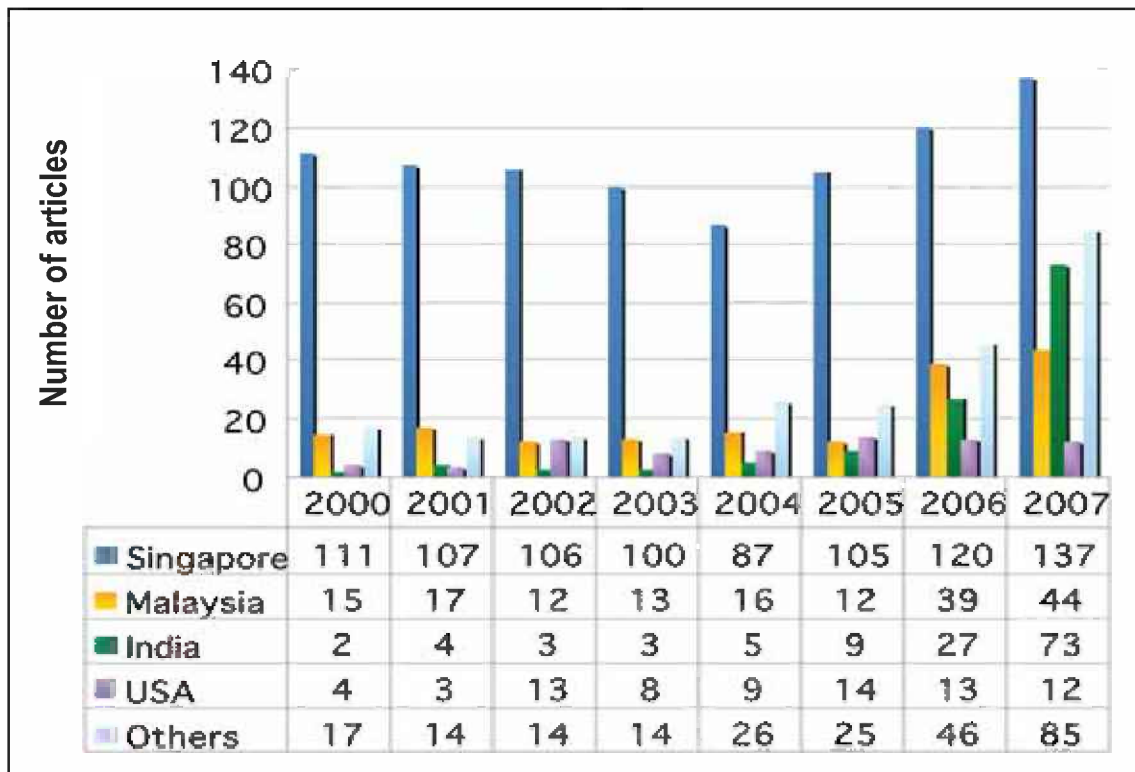


Fig. 2 Pie charts show the distribution of manuscripts (by country) submitted to SMJ in (e) 2004, (f) 2005, (g) 2006, and (h) 2007.

How about the breakdown (by country) of articles actually published in the SMJ? The number of published articles/annum has increased from 149 in 2000 to 351 in 2007. In 2007, more than one-third of these published articles were from Singapore (137), followed by India (73) and Malaysia (44). The number of published articles from Singapore has also showed an increase over the past eight years (Fig. 5). A factor to consider would of course be the time lag between submission/acceptance of manuscripts and actual publication. We can therefore expect to see a rise in the number of published articles from India, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in the coming year, provided that many of these manuscripts succeed passing through the peer-review filter.

The vast majority of our reviewers are doctors, academics, scientists, and paramedical and health-related professionals based in Singapore. We also have quite a number of reviewers from nearby Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong. Although it is not difficult to recruit potential reviewers located in faraway places in this age of internet and email connectivity, we have resisted this easy option and tried to keep the number of reviewers from further afield to the minimum. The reason for doing so is to try to maintain the Singapore/Southeast Asian character of the



**Fig. 5** Bar chart shows the number of articles (by country) published in SMJ from 2000 to 2007.

journal. Our reviewers have a strong influence and crucial role in maintaining the standards and scientific integrity of the SMJ,<sup>(4)</sup> as well as ensuring that the journal contents are firmly rooted in and relevant to Singapore and the region.

Like Singapore Inc, the SMJ welcomes “foreign talent” in the form of high-quality manuscripts, and at the same time, aims to develop a global outlook and outreach. Remaining parochial means running the risk of being left behind. The SMJ has, without specific intent, become an international journal; while striving to consolidate its status

as a scientifically-sound one with firmly-established Singaporean and regional roots.

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